

VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE BREACH:
ISSUES IN TIMES OF MASSIVE SOVIET IMMIGRATION

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"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness,... it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair..."

(C. Dickens, Tale of Two Cities).

Israel is staggering under a massive influx of new immigrants, that in one year have increased her population by 4.1%, with the addition of close to 200,000 new citizens (Central Bureau of Statistics, Jerusalem Post, 22.2.91). Only 1949, at the establishment of the State, witnessed more new immigrants, but never before have there been some many immigrants from one country in a single year. In the year 1990, 185,000 persons arrived from the USSR, constituting over 90% of all new immigrants. By way of contrast, between the years 1967 and 1983, a 16-year period, some 165,000 immigrants arrived from the USSR, of a total of close to 500,000 immigrants from all countries (Korazim, 1988).

Over the course of the next few years (3-5) some 1 million Soviet immigrants are expected based on projections from the number of family reunion applications and the current rate of exit visa granted (Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, 1990, JAFI, 1990). Considering that Israel's population stood at 4.5 million on the eve of the massive immigration (Sept., 1989), in a very short time, 1 out of every 5 Israelis will have recently immigrated from the USSR.

One should ask, how does a small country with many other problems, (our recent "non-war" with Iraq is but one example), handle this incredible mass immigration? It is not far from the truth to say that it does so only with difficulty, and with a lot

of help from her friends. As recently as May, 1990, the State Controller Her Honorable Miriam Ben-Porat, issued a clear indictment of the government's lack of policy, planning and service development for new immigrants who had already arrived, and in anticipation of those waiting to come (State Controller's Report, #40).

Particularly problematic were the areas of housing and employment opportunities. Those who have been following the news, have noted the brouhaha that resulted surrounding the loan guarantees that the Israeli Government requested urgently for immigrant housing. The budget needed for the next 5 years is estimated by the Ministry of Housing at \$16 billion, while the loan guarantees amount to \$400 million. While these two areas appear to be the clear jurisdiction of the government, in fact, both initial housing and employment arrangements for the new immigrants are often left largely to the handling of the new immigrants themselves, their friends, families and the voluntary organizations.

As Kramer has noted in his studies (1981,1985), the Israeli voluntary sector is expected to supply complementary social services, with the government providing limited fiscal resources to do so. With the enormous immigration, and within the framework of financial contingencies, the government has leaned hard on the voluntary sector to take up the slack. How are the voluntary organizations functioning in this rapidly developing situation? This is the question that we focus on in this paper.

WHAT BRINGS SOVIET JEWS TO ISRAEL?

Immigrants can be differentiated by the source of their motivation, whether away from an intolerable situation (such as the Holocaust Survivors who immigrated in the early years of the State of Israel) or those who freely choose to immigrate for idealistic, religious or Zionistic reasons (Eisenstadt, 1954; Korazim, 1988). In general, Soviet immigrants are perceived as arriving in Israel by the former rather than latter motivation, although there is probably a mix of motivations. The "push" motivation comes from the frustration and hardship due to life under a totalitarian regime. Immigrants believe their chances of building a fulfilling life in Israel exceed what they could expect under the turbulent, shaky regime of Michael Gorbachev. Particularly unnerving is the virulent rise in Anti-Semitism, some of it apparently with the tacit agreement of the government. The "pull" motivation comes from the recognition that Jews in Israel and abroad have fought and struggled for their right to emigrate from the Soviet Union, in campaigns such as "Let My People Go". They are wanted here (Shai & Duchin, 1990), they are granted immediate citizenship through the Law of the Return and the Law of Citizenship (1950) (at least for those who can prove their Jewishness), and probably most important of all, many have friends or family here, either who immigrated in the 70's or who have preceded them by several months to a year.

Yet, life in Israel is hardly easy street, immigrants face a daunting range of challenges from the acquisition of new language, to the absorption of Jewish religion and culture so long denied

with the USSR, to fighting with a bureaucratic system reminiscent of their own. However, Soviet immigrants continue to arrive, even during the first days of the non-war with Iraq when bombs were falling in Tel Aviv, at a rate of some 500-1000 immigrants a day. So there is still a positive pull for Soviet Jews to leave the USSR and come to Israel, despite the problems.

DIRECT ABSORPTION POLICY - OLD SOLUTION TO A NEW PROBLEM

An agreement was signed in November, 1988 The Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) (the major fund-raising arm of the government's immigration services), and the Israeli Government for a new policy for the enhancement of direct absorption. Until this time most immigrants from Eastern bloc countries spent their first period in Israel in absorption centers, where Hebrew language classes were available along with other family and social services and contacts were initiated with Israeli society. During this period permanent housing and either employment or studies were meant to be arranged (Horowitz, 1989). "Absorption centers ... were intended to create an interim phase which would serve as a "buffer" between the pre-immigration and post-immigration periods in the immigrant's life. " (Horowitz, p.224, 1989). In light of the enormous numbers of new arrivals, accommodation in the 41 absorption centers with a maximum capacity for 10,000 persons was technically and financially impossible (the cost per person per day in an absorption center is estimated at \$22) (JAFI report, 1990).

The model of direct absorption, as of Feb. 1991 used with

all immigrants from the Eastern-bloc countries, has deprived Soviet immigrants of the luxury of an interim stage. In direct absorption, the major burden for immigrant absorption is transferred straight to the informal support networks, including the voluntary organizations, with the back-up of municipal Social Services.

In fact, direct absorption has been the norm for years among many of the immigrants arriving from Western Europe and the United States, who due to enhanced social and financial resources, were able to move directly into housing on the open market and find their own employment opportunities.

IMMIGRANT RIGHTS - THE ABSORPTION BASKET

What does the State of Israel offer to the new immigrant? In contrast to the range of services and eligibilities that were offered the much smaller volume of immigrants in the 70s and 80s, today's immigrant in 1991 can expect a lump sum known as the "absorption basket", that amounts to some \$9,000 for the first year for a family of three. This is already some \$1,500 less than was offered to immigrants who arrived in 1990. The largest item in the absorption basket is rent, which is some \$350 dollars a month, at a minimum. In addition, they get income maintenance of \$600 a month for 6 months, during the time that they are studying in Hebrew language institutes (ulpan). After that, they are on their own. A recent radio announcement declared that this minimal grant will soon be reduced to \$7,000, and that it will be in the form of a long-term loan.

To summarize the background to the current situation, we have the following points:

* A national ideology and laws that support the right of Jews to immigrate to Israel, and is shared by the government, the voluntary organizations and citizens in general (Gann-Gluckstein, 1979).

* A huge volume of immigrants coming to Israel, compared to past years.

* Competing needs for societal resources such as defense, and other services that serve the whole population (education, health, labor and social affairs, infrastructure etc.) (Habib, 1991).

* A shift in absorption policy from absorption centers to direct municipal absorption (JAFI, 1990).

* Cut-backs on the allocations in the absorption basket.

What role then do the voluntary organizations play in this compelling human drama?

VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS RISE TO THE CHALLENGE

The notion of community responsibility is well rooted in traditional Jewish religion and life-style. Most of the social institutions and the voluntary organizations have their roots in the era that preceded the establishment of the State of Israel (Kramer, 1981). As noted by Kramer (1981), there were essentially three types of voluntary organizations in the pre-state era, 1) orthodox religious organizations, 2) labor-Zionist organizations based on political interests that developed into the Labor Federation and the Worker's Sick Fund 3) non-partisan, apolitical welfare organizations, such as the women's voluntary organizations. These three voluntary bases are still apparent in the types of voluntary organizations active in the absorption of new immigrants in general, and Soviet immigrants in particular.

Israel also has a long-standing tradition of specialized immigrant aid organizations, some organized by geographical locations, others by language/cultural background (Gann-Gluckstein, 1979; Korazim, 1988). Some thirty immigrant organizations and associations exist that are recognized by the Ministry of the Interior, registered as nonprofit organizations and supported financially by the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption and/or the Jewish Agency.

An example of this type of organization is the Association of Americans and Canadians in Israel, AACI. One of the most successful, and well-organized of the immigrant associations, AACI has been dominant in the umbrella organization of all the immigrant associations, and thus has a significant role in representing the interests and the needs of new immigrants to the government. The aims of AACI, as elaborated in their constitution are shown in Appendix 1, to give some idea as to how immigrant organizations function.

Methods and description of the voluntary organizations

We conducted an exploratory study designed to highlight the problems and issues in the current situation as the basis for a larger-scale empirical study, for which we are currently seeking funding. Thus, we studied 4 organizations that each represent an archetypal voluntary organization active in the Israeli immigrant absorption scene; a women's welfare organization (WIZO), a woman's religious organization (Emunah), a new-style Zionist organization (The Israeli Forum), and an immigrant's association (The Zionist Forum). This is by no means representative of all the activity in the voluntary sector, since many voluntary

organizations have risen to the challenge.

An analysis of their "task environment" (Hasenfeld, 1983) was conducted through interviews with national representatives, local branch managers and volunteers in order to understand their functioning within the service delivery system. In addition, a structured interview based on the known advantages and disadvantages of voluntary service organizations (e.g. Kramer, 1981; Katan, 1990) was conducted with the national coordinator of immigrant absorption, to highlight issues and problems in service delivery. Any literature that the organization issues was also used to document their position. Furthermore, open-ended interviews were conducted with key informants involved in coordination within the voluntary sector around issues of immigrant absorption. The organizational structure is briefly described as well as the nature of the types of services they provide. We do not present all the data collected, but rather have synthesized our findings to highlight key issues in the functioning of the voluntary sector.

1. WIZO - established in 1920. It is a well-known, non-party voluntary women's organization originally founded in London, England. WIZO is recognized by the UN as an NGO (World Wizo Information Dept, 1990). Worldwide it has 50 federations, and 250,000 members, including branches in Budapest and Moscow.

The aims of the organization are to 1) provide for the welfare of infants, children, youth and elderly, 2) advance the status of women in Israel, 3) strengthen the relationship

between World Jewry and the State of Israel. WIZO has been active since the pre-1948 era in providing a range of services including the establishment of children creches, youth services, social services to women, rape crisis centers, summer camps for mothers of large families and other projects.

The immigrant absorption department is one of 14 different service departments that WIZO runs. The exact number of volunteers that work with WIZO is hard to estimate. It has some 100,000 Israeli members and the central office estimates that about 7,500 persons are active volunteers. Of these, approximately 1/3 or 2,500 are active in volunteering for work with new immigrants. Approximately 1/3 (53) of the 140 branch offices are actively involved in local projects related to Soviet immigration.

There is wide variability in how each local branch operates, depending on local volunteer initiatives and the concentration of new immigrants in the town. In general, volunteers try to reach new immigrant families in the first period, preferably in the first days, and weeks. They help them with the settling-in period, accompanying them to the various initial official contacts, with the banks, with the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, the Ministry of the Interior, and helping them find an apartment and basic furnishings. Volunteers often run interference with the bureaucracies, which can be Byzantine. WIZO recently opened a translation service, to help the new Soviet immigrants translate documents into Hebrew. Some volunteer activities are done in some places by WIZO volunteers, in others by matching a veteran Israeli family, who are often not

affiliated directly with WIZO with a new immigrant families.

2. Emunah - (Means "belief") was originally established under another name and auspices in 1940, as a national, religious women's labor-Zionist organization. In 1977, it re-organized under its current structure. It is the largest orthodox Jewish women's' organization, with branches in 24 countries. Two years ago they also opened a branch office in Moscow. They have some 90,000 members in Israel, of whom about 1/2 are active in volunteering. Of those who are active, about 10-15% (5,000) are active in volunteer efforts with the Soviet immigrants.

The aims of Emunah are to support the Jewish people in the State of Israel on the basis of Jewish law and tradition, to develop religious consciousness of women in the country in all walks of life, and to encourage national religious values. They have been very successful in activating new volunteers who find work with new immigrants a stimulating religious challenge and different from other activities of Emunah. Of the 130 branch offices, about 1/2 are involved in working with Soviet families, along the lines of "family adoption" mentioned above.

Emunah is very active in providing religious training and education to new immigrant groups, including Ethiopian immigrants. Among the programs that Emunah runs are, Hebrew language education programs that include religious curricula, Shabbat family weekends to expose new immigrant to a traditional Jewish environment, and to explain Jewish customs, holidays, and religious concepts.

3. The Israeli Forum - Jewish Direct Line - established in

1985 is a Zionistic, a-political organization, with the express purpose of developing direct ties with diaspora Young Leadership. The aims of the organization are to encourage direct involvement of Jews from abroad in Israel's problems, particularly in the level of education and scientific achievement instead of only looking to Diaspora Jewry as the source of donations. Furthermore, the Israeli Forum does not seek to promote immigration per se among its overseas contacts, but to develop an ongoing partnership. It aims to reinforce democratic, pluralistic values, through a variety of programs.

It has six programs of which Project Reut (Friendship) is only one. This project is the model project that the two other organizations have followed of "family adoption" of new immigrants. While WIZO may have a more instrumental orientation, and Emunah a more religious one, Project Reut has put its emphasis squarely on social absorption through the development of informal, ties between veteran Israeli families and new immigrants. Thus, an Israeli family is matched by professional interests, and number and ages of children, so that the connection formed is one that has the potential for friendship between the two families. It operates by a cell formula, with each organization member operating a group of families in his neighborhood. There are only volunteers, no professionals involved in the program. While the organization has some 500 members, it runs adoption programs for some 3600 families throughout Israel.

4. The Zionist Forum - established in 1.5.1989 as THE immigrant association for Soviet immigrants. The head of the organization

is Natan (Anatole) Sharansky, and the 3 other directors are also well known "refuseniks", who came to Israel with an established network of contacts both in Israel and among influential Jews and non-Jews abroad. In 1990, some 20 members of the organization, themselves "old" immigrants from the USSR, were hired to develop projects and branch offices in Israel four large cities (Haifa, Tel-Aviv, Jerusalem, Beer-Sheba). Today, The Forum has about 100 active members, who are themselves Russian-speaking, 35 persons employed, with plans to add more salaried employees. It has about 1000 volunteers nationwide. The work in the branch offices is based on a branch manager, and several part-time case managers, who all work with volunteers and in conjunction with the municipal volunteer coordinator from the Dept. of Social Services.

The Forum aims are to act as a bridge between the new immigrants and Israeli society. "We are professionals in understanding the Soviet and Israeli mentality and we will work for long-term solutions that will benefit both sides" (S. Borochoy, Deputy Director, 1991). They do not want "band-aid short-term solutions" such as having engineers work as unskilled industrial workers, or doctors sweeping the streets.

The Forum is the umbrella organization that combines all the local and earlier Soviet- origin associations. This includes political, religious, ethnic, educational, professional and veterans, on the local and national level. There are 30 direct branches of the Forum in the four major metropolitan areas. In addition, in the smaller locations the original organizations

still function in their old structure, and Forum services are offered indirectly.

The Forum is also involved in helping the new immigrants at the first stages of their absorption, in particular by supplying information about services, eligibilities and the whereabouts of housing and employment opportunities. However, they do not see themselves as only concerned with the most recent immigrants, but with the needs of the Russian immigrants, both during the first 5 years. According to their reports, they have offered services to some 50,000 new immigrants. Among the unique services they offer are photocopying and translation of documents, legal advice, and low-interest loans.

Of all the organizations, The Zionist Forum comes closest to being called a self-help organization, in that the organization is run by Soviet immigrants, and they are working for the betterment of their own conditions and those who share their predicament. They have a variety of programs, many of which are innovative, although their long-term track record is as yet unestablished.

The Forum has succeeded in making a serious impact in a very short time, largely because they have a charismatic leader, with an apparently infinite capacity to attract donations from abroad. Most of the people active in the organization have no professional training in the human services. The organization was "adopted" by AACI, in order to foster its growth and development. They were given organizational consultation, and their manpower trained by AACI professionals, who are experienced in the field of immigrant absorption. However, they are now in

the process of diverging paths and developing their own model. For example, recently they decided to offer translations at no cost instead of asking immigrants to pay a minimal fee.

The obvious advantage of the Forum over the other voluntary organizations is its staff of Russian-speakers, where as all the other voluntary organizations are handicapped by having small numbers of volunteers who speak Russian. Even among the formal social services, there is an acute shortage of Russian-speaking human service professionals. Part of the reason for this is that "old" Soviet immigrants are rarely attracted into the social sciences in general and the helping professions (e.g. social work) in particular. While there are thousands of new immigrant physicians, there are almost NO social workers.

ISSUES IN THE FUNCTIONING OF VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS

1. The power behind information

In order to play a significant role in the absorption of new immigrants, the voluntary organizations must know WHO they are, WHERE they are, and HOW MANY they are. This information should be theoretically available from either the Ministry of the Interior, who registers the new immigrants as they enter the country or the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, which grants new immigrants rights. However, the processing of hundreds, and sometimes thousands of new immigrants in one day is a tedious process, and the LISTS of new immigrants are hard to come by.

One complicating factor is that from the airport, many new immigrants proceed to the home of a friend or relative, and from there arrange housing. Therefore, they are moving around and all

the agencies are having trouble tracking them.

Initially, there was reluctance on the part of the government agencies to share the information about the new immigrants with the voluntary organizations, in order to control the intervention of volunteers into an area of governmental jurisdiction. However, as the numbers swelled and direct absorption became the only absorption policy in force for new Soviet immigrants, there was increased willingness to share the information. Still, the information that was acquired was often incomplete, out-of-date and had to be cross-checked between two or more sources.

Voluntary organizations with sufficient manpower use novel methods to reach out and find the new immigrants. This ranges from waiting at the airport, to serving tea at the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, to finding new immigrants at the banks when they go to open their first checking account. There are also some cross-referrals between voluntary organizations, when services are available only in another agency.

Another issue relating to information is that policies, eligibilities and the service map as a whole are constantly shifting. This makes counselling new immigrants very difficult, and requires the voluntary organizations to be constantly running after up-dated information.

2. The meaning of volunteer- voluntary organizations

Voluntary organizations in their present form are an invention of the modern welfare state, and are related to the democratic political tradition. It is important to recall that for the average Soviet citizen, volunteering means being informed

that there is a mass demonstration in favor of the communist leaders power and you had better be there! In other words, volunteering has the connotation of work or responsibilities that are foisted on you, at the behest of the ruling powers. Furthermore, if people are interested in your welfare, there is probably a hidden motive somewhere that relates to social control. Soviet citizens are characterized by a basic suspicion of strangers (Horowitz, 1989). Thus, a voluntary organization and a well-meaning volunteer are recognizable social institutions to a recent Soviet immigrant.

The word in Russian for volunteer also has specific cultural connotations. It means a "do-gooder", and conjures up images of the Friendly Visitor of yesterday, that are not all positive. Thus, a family who volunteers to help a Soviet immigrant family in their initial absorption period, and who does so under the aegis of a volunteer organization, comes with a set of roles and concepts that are not entirely clear to the new immigrant.

Another manifestation of this cultural contrast is the extreme difficulty that volunteer organizations and/or the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption or municipalities have encountered in trying to get new immigrants to either volunteer or take part in self-help efforts. Once the initial goal has been met, say a social encounter, the immigrants see no point in continuing the group effort.

3. Problems with the Use of Volunteers

There are many more people who are willing to help, as volunteers than there are organizational structures capable of

managing them. There have been several public campaigns to call for volunteers, and many have answered the call. However, how to make use of the volunteers that have come forward; to train and supervise them, and deal with the questions that they bring back from their contacts with the Russian families, is a serious problem.

We heard time and time again from Israelis that wanted to volunteer, and had even gone so far as to put their name on a list, or sign up somewhere, but were never contacted. This will eventually soak up the reservoir of good will that is currently motivated people who had not been involved in volunteer activities up until now.

On the other hand, among those who had volunteered, there was often competition between volunteers over early new immigrants, but as time went on burn-out, and drop-out set in. One reason mentioned is that the cost of adopting a family, both in terms of the basic necessities scrounged from the attic and closets and from friends and neighbors, and the investment of time. It is difficult to adopt more than one family at a time, and language and cultural barriers impede the development of reciprocal ties of friendship. Other volunteer services require the commitment of long-term volunteer work, that few Israelis can muster. While in some voluntary organizations, administrative roles were filled by paid employees, in others, jobs that required full-time investment were filled by volunteers. As one coordinator remarked, " We are tired, and worn-out by direct absorption".

All the organizations used both formal and informal methods of volunteer recruitment. However, there was a clear consensus that the method that worked the most effectively was personal contact. However, if recruitment is a function of personal contacts, then even the most well-connected volunteer reaches the limits of his social contacts. This is particularly true in Project Reut, where the cell method operates independent of an organized branch office. Furthermore, recruitment through social contacts tends to preserve a certain "type" of volunteer, that can be matched with a similar type of new immigrant. Even when public methods are used, such as a open telephone line at a volunteer center, middle class persons are more likely to come forward than those closer to the poverty line, consistent with research on volunteers elsewhere.

While all the organizations had some type of training and supervision mechanism, few organizations could keep pace with the volume of new volunteers and new immigrants that needed services.

4. Defining domain consensus

One of the problems facing the voluntary organizations is the division of responsibility among themselves and between the voluntary sector and the governmental agencies involved in immigrant absorption. The more voluntary organizations, the more bodies trying to coordinate them, to the confusion of all. The Israel Volunteer Center, based in Tel Aviv has tried to organize round table meetings of all the voluntary organizations that are involved in some aspect of immigrant absorption, together with the municipal volunteer coordinator and representatives of the government agencies. WIZO has also declared coordination between

the voluntary agencies as one of its goals in absorption work.

However, in the field coordination efforts have mixed results. Some of the volunteers who are the most active in absorption have stopped coming to these round table meetings, since they have the feeling that they are all talk and no results, and there are so many demands on their time. On the other hand, in some round tables, there is the beginning of domain consensus, as Hasenfeld (1983) has termed it. This has lead to some joint projects where each organization contributes the skills or resources where it has a relative advantage, and thus together they are able to meet challenges in special needs of the new immigrants.

5. Trends in Service Delivery in Times of Flux and Influx

One question currently being debated both among human service professionals and those active in voluntary organizations is the extent to which services for new immigrants should be separate (e.g. separate social work and counselling services run by either the Jewish Agency or the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption) or whether they should be part of the municipal Depts. of Social Service (funded then by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the City Council). The corollary question applies to voluntary organizations that run many departments, such as WIZO. Should services for the new immigrant elderly be part of the immigrant absorption department or the elderly services regularly scheduled in WIZO branches? It is likely that with increasing financial pressure, there will be fewer resources for special services and more social services offered alongside

those offered to veteran Israelis. This invites competition between new immigrants and veteran Israelis over scarce social service resources.

It was often reported that volunteers sometimes encounter new immigrants in dire financial straits. It should be remembered that Soviet immigrants do not arrive with ample foreign currency that they can use to cushion their transition to Israeli life. One type of predicament is the result of having to pay 12 months rent in advance to ensure an apartment, another was caused by disruptions in daily life due to Iraqi SCUD attacks, either through lack of services, lack of salary or lack of housing that was damaged in the attacks. In many cases, voluntary organizations and their affiliated volunteers dug into their own funds to cover emergency needs that should not have been their responsibility. No volunteer agency has the organizational structure to provide the safety net entitlements that should be handled by the social security administration (in Israel called the National Insurance Institute).

On the other hand, none of the voluntary organizations has the volunteer manpower or the financial resources to handle all of immigrants' needs. Yet, we are witnessing a process by which non-professional, volunteers, with little or no professional guidance or backup, find themselves trying to meet ever-expanding needs of ever-growing numbers of immigrants, with ever-shrinking government allocations. One possible scenario is that the voluntary organizations will get more financial support, and then become more bureaucratic, thus undermining some of advantages voluntary organization have of easy access, rapid adaptability, and

innovation (Katan, 1990). Another possible outcome, is a breakdown in the system. We are already seeing that the voluntary organizations active in the field are having trouble attracting long-term committed volunteers, and retaining the volunteers they do have. In the wings, are waiting new volunteers that no one has managed to engage, and thus they too will soon become disinterested. At the same time, the new immigrants are discouraged, embittered and to a large degree, neglected.

HOW DO VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS TRADE THEIR EXPANDING ROLE FOR MORE SAY IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS?

Despite the apparent dependence of the government on the voluntary sector, it is difficult to see just how the voluntary organizations will bring effective pressure to bear to change policies, to engage the government in effective planning of service delivery or to stem the tide of immigration.

Although several national coordinators reported meetings with Cabinet ministers and people in positions of power, it is not at all clear to what extent their ideas, their feed-back, their dilemmas are getting through to the political leadership.

There are rumours that Natan Sharansky (head of the Forum) has political ambitions and wants to run for a seat in the Parliament (Knesset). Already, there are those in the voluntary sector and the government who are wary of his growing power, jealous of his excellent command of public relations and his ability to raise money, and suspicious of his motives in building up a power base through the Forum, which represents so many potential voters. New immigrants can vote in Israeli elections

only 6 months after their arrival. However, on the other hand it is possible that he genuinely represents the needs and issues of all new immigrants and can bring positive pressure on the government to rise to the challenge in the same way that the immigrants and the voluntary organizations have done.

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Appendix 1

Article 2 of the Constitution of the Association of Americans and Canadians in Israel

1. To assist members and prospective members to become integrated and to participate in the life of the country as rapidly and fully as possible.
2. To extend to members and prospective members such advice, guidance, assistance and services as will facilitate such integration. The service of the Association shall include but shall not be limited to:
reception, housing, job placement, loans, counselling, social and cultural and educational activities.
3. To represent the interests of members and prospective members in the dealing with the Government and National Agencies on matters affecting integration.
4. To encourage Americans and Canadians to come on Aliyah, and to work for conditions in Israel fostering this end.
5. To help Americans and Canadians better understand Israel, and to help Israelis better understand American and Canadian Jewish life.

(AACI, 1986, as quoted in Korazim, 1988).